

# DE News

**October 26, 2001 – Iowa Department of Education – Ted Stilwill, Director**

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## **Setting priorities to manage limited budgets**

As I've been meeting with various educators and superintendents these past several weeks, I am impressed by the number who recognize that our severe budget reductions require completely new thinking and strategies. I would extend that perspective to all of you who are struggling with difficult choices about how to spend limited funding. Yes, Iowa's educational system is strong, but we have many challenges facing us - in addition to budget reductions, we see teacher shortages, administrator shortages and achievement gaps. All school leaders must make difficult choices, set priorities and stay committed to maintaining our system of quality education.

At the state level, that priority and commitment will remain with support for improving instruction. We believe that recruiting and keeping the best educational staff and improving professional development are far-reaching strategies with multiple and long-lasting benefits, not the least of which is increased student learning. I would encourage each district to consider teacher support a top priority as well.

Please remember, too, that as educational leaders, we must provide a shared advocacy for education in Iowa. To repeat my message of several weeks ago: Iowa's best assets to move out of this economic downturn will be our educational assets. We need a strong early childhood, elementary and secondary system, but we also need the strength of our community colleges and universities. No other state can match the collective strength of these assets that allows us to positively position our citizens and our state in the new economy. To diminish these assets too greatly would be to limit our future unwisely. If we have no priorities, then we have no vision. The strongest obligation of leadership is not to simply manage the present, but to assure the future.

## **Enrollment increases at community colleges**

Total enrollment this fall at Iowa's 15 community colleges increased 5% over last year, in part because Iowans realize they need quality education that is affordable and accessible, especially during an economic downturn.

"Historically, community college enrollments increase during difficult economic times," says Jan Friedel, Director of the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation. "When the economy gets more severe and unemployment increases, Iowans of all ages recognize the value of expanding their employment options by gaining new skills and knowledge," she said. "They turn to community colleges because we traditionally provide the quality they need at lower tuition rates, and with facilities that are closer to home or work."

The enrollment increases have occurred at the same time community college annual tuition increased an average of 11.6%, or \$225, to \$2,162 for a full-time student. The average semester hour tuition rate this fall is \$72.05.

### **Enrollment declines for K-12 students**

Enrollment at Iowa's public schools this fall is 489,805 students, a decline of 4,486 or nearly

1 percent when compared to last year. Enrollment has declined for the past five years by 15,718 students, or about 3 percent, following a peak enrollment year in 1996-97 when students numbered 505,523.

We expect future enrollments to decline as well. Data shows that during the 2000-01 school year, outgoing 12<sup>th</sup> grade students exceeded incoming kindergarten enrollments by more than 2,600 students.

Seventy-two percent, or 266 of Iowa's 371 districts, experienced enrollment declines this fall. Their combined total loss was 7,185 students. Twenty-eight districts reported increases for a combined total of 2,699 students. One district was unchanged.

### **Marion educator named Teacher of the Year**

Jennifer Erbe, a third-grade teacher from Starry Elementary School in Marion, has been named Iowa's 2002-03 Teacher of the Year. She will begin her duties next summer, and will have a one-year sabbatical during which she will visit schools and communities as Iowa's "Ambassador for Education." The Teacher of the Year program recognizes teachers who inspire excellence, motivates students and peers, and demonstrates exceptional skills in any state-approved or accredited school.

### **Remember teacher compensation deadlines**

November 1 is the deadline to apply for Option 1 (mentoring and induction) and Option 2 (career paths and salaries) as part of the new teacher compensation policies. For more information or application forms, please visit

<http://www.state.ia.us/educate/programs/tc/application.html>.

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